

The Guerrilla Warfare Badge

Das Bandenkampf-Abzeichen

- 1st Class in Gold for 75 Ground Combat days and 100 days Air Combat
- 2nd Class in Silver for 50 Ground Combat days and 75 days Air Combat
- 3rd Class in Bronze for 20 Ground Combat days and 30 days Air Combat

Founded on 30th January, 1944 by Adolf Hitler

During the Russian and Balkan campaigns, groups of irregulars and saboteurs were organized behind German lines and operated against static troops and lines of communications. The vast areas of the Russian hinterland and rugged mountains of the Balkans made containment and destruction of these groups very difficult. In the beginning, security troops including the SD and Police as well as locally-raised anti-Communist militia were used and eventually the Wehrmacht, all three branches, became involved as partisan activity spread to France and Italy.

On 29th January, 1944, Hitler issued the following order over his signature:

1. In recognition of the battle waged against ever stronger and better armed bandit groups, I hereby found the Guerrilla Warfare Badge.
2. The Guerrilla Warfare Badge is a decoration for bravery and achievement.
3. The Guerrilla Warfare Badge will be worn on the left breast side.
4. The awardees will receive a certificate of award.
5. The Guerrilla Warfare Badge may remain with the next of kin as a remembrance at the death of the holder.

This is the first issue badge by the Berlin firm of C.E. Juncker. Convex and with a broad pin. Smooth plated finish



When Juncker was bombed out in 1945, manufacture of these badges passed to several other firms whose names are unknown to this day. This badge is dished out on the reverse but the areas under the snake's heads are cut out as on the original Juncker badge. On this particular model, the badge has around pin. It should be noted that most medal manufacturers did not make pins but bought them from other companies. In early 1945, the chaotic transportation conditions in Germany made uniformity in such matters impossible.



This is another example of the second production but with a wide pin.



Note: All of these pieces are of absolutely original pre-1945 production but there are indeed other issues, some of them quite crude in make and finish.

The German Third Reich lasted for twelve years and during that time frame, many variations of uniforms, insignia and decorations existed. When the war broke out in 1939, medals and badges, for example, were well-made and finished but as the war continued, the higher quality metals originally used in the manufacture of medals and decorations were restricted to more vital areas of war productions.

A badge once struck, for example, from nickel was later cast in zinc. But zinc is a metal that does not plate well so the solution was to coat the raw zinc piece with a commercial finish called 'Brenn-Lack.' This was a metallic paste that was applied to the badge and then baked in an oven for a period of time. During the course of this process, the metallic bits in suspension fused to form what appeared to be a fine-quality plating.

Because the dried 'Brenn-Lack' would rub off, the badges were painted with a matte lacquer to seal the surfaces. Years later, ignorant collectors deciding to polish their badges, discovered that once the lacquer was removed, the old finish powdered and vanished, leaving a dull, bare, gray badge behind.

This is only one example of manufacturing techniques that were very prevalent and at the very end of the war. Badges were made of Bakelite and, at the very end, silk-screened and sewn down onto the uniform.

Into this collecting world, filled with such anomalies, many self-important collectors have rushed, filled with their own, most often totally incorrect, personal opinions of what was original and what was not.

The words 'always' and 'never' ought not ever to be used because such absolutes simply do not exist.

A.D. Royster